

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
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USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
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CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT:DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - SEPTEMBER 27

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE, FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR SEPTEMBER 27, 1977. FYI ONLY, THE OFFICER DOING THE BRIEFING TODAY WAS JOHN TRATTNER.

Q. CAN YOU CLARIFY THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION REGARDING ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE PROPOSAL ? YOU SAID YESTERDAY THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS PLEASED WITH THE RESPONSE, BUT YOU DID EXPRESS DISAGREEMENT WITH SOME OF THE PRESS INTERPRETATIONS. YOU DIDN'T SAY WHAT UNCLASSIFIED

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THEY WERE. THE SECRETARY OF STATE UP IN NEW YORK WAS QUOTED SAYING SOMETHING CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT, NAMELY, THAT THE CONDITIONS DO NOT ACCURATELY REFLECT OUR VIEWS. CAN YOU GIVE US ANY MORE COMPREHENSIVE REPORT AS TO WHAT CONDITIONS WE ARE TALKING ABOUT HERE?

A. NO. I THINK THE SECRETARY WAS AT LEAST QUOTED ON SOME OF WHAT YOU ARE ASKING, BUT I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO ADD TO WHAT HE SAID. I HAVE A COPY OF WHAT HE SAID AND I THINK THAT WAS AT THE U.N. IF I AM NOT MISTAKEN. BUT I

DON'T HAVE ANYTHING I CAN ADD TO IT. NOTHING IN THE WAY OF FURTHER FACTS OR ADDITIONAL INTERPRETATION.

Q. YOU CAN'T TELL US WHAT THE UNITED STATES VIEW IS OF THE ISRAELI POSITION ON THE UNIFIED ARAB EDELEGATION?

A. OTHER THAN WHAT I SAID YESTERDAY, I CAN'T ADD ANYTHING TO THAT, NOR TO WHAT THE SECRETARY HAS SAID.

Q. WELL FRANKLY, IT'S TOTALLY UNCLEAR ON THE RECORD THEN, AS TO WHAT THE U.S. POSITION IS.

A. DO YOU MEAN THE U.S. POSITION ON WHAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE SAID. THAT IS, WHAT THEY ACCEPT?

Q. YES.

A. WELL, I THINK IT'S AS I SAID YESTERDAY -- IF IT'S
UNCLEAR IT IS BECAUSE WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS
WHAT OUR POSITION, PRECISELY, IS.

Q. WHAT THE UNITED STATES IS SAYING IS THAT THE ISRAELI
POSITION DOES NOT ACCURATELY REFLECT THE AMERICAN VIEW?

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A. THAT'S RIGHT.

Q. YOU CAN'T TELL US WHAT THE AMERICAN VIEWS ARE?

A. NO, SIR.

Q. DO YOU WANT ISRAEL TO DROP THOSE CONDITIONS, OR ARE
YOU TRYING TO PERSUADE THE OTHER SIDE TO ACCEPT THEM.

A. HERE WE GO AGAIN. YOU ARE ASKING ME TO TALK ABOUT
NEGOTIATING POSITIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WE ARE HAVING WITH
PARTICIPANTS IN THE SITUATIONS; AND I JUST CAN'T DO IT.

Q. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THEM. YOU TALKED ABOUT THEM
YESTERDAY, AND THE SECRETARY TALKED ABOUT THEM UP AT NEW
YORK. YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THEM IN AN OPAQUE WAY. WE
ARE SIMPLY TRYING TO GET CLARIFICATION OF WHAT IT IS YOU
ARE TALKING ABOUT.

A. I CAN'T CLARIFY IT ANY FURTHER THAN I HAVE DONE UP TO
NOW.

Q. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ABOUT
THE ISRAELI POSITION. DOES THIS MEAN THAT WHEN DAYAN LEFT

THE WHITE HOUSE HE GAVE YOU AN IMPRESSION THAT ISRAEL
WOULD ACCEPT A DIFFERENT KIND OF PROPOSITION? AND THEN
DID THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT CHANGE IT DURING THE PROCESS
OF APPROVING IT?

A. I CAN'T GET INTO IT WITH YOU.

Q. IN OTHER WORDS, ISRAEL PLAYED FOUL WITH THE DISCUSSIONS
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AT THE WHITE HOUSE -- IS THAT THE IMPLICATION?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GIVE YOU IMPLICATIONS. I AM IN THE
SAME POSITION I HAVE BEEN SINCE I WAS UP HERE YESTERDAY.

YOU ARE ASKING ME TO TELL YOU WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT WITH THE ISRAELIS AND WITH OTHERS, AND YOU ARE ASKING ME TO GIVE YOU WHAT OUR VIEWS AND PREFERENCES OR POSITIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND PROPOSALS ARE. I AM TELLING YOU THAT IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS, WITH NEGOTIATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS GOING ON I AM NOT, PERSONALLY, IN A POSITION HERE TO ELABORATE THEM FOR YOU.

Q. THEN WHY IS THE SECRETARY COMING OUT WITH THOSE RESERVATIONS? IF HE WANTS TO KEEP THE DISCUSSIONS SECRET -- THEN KEEP THEM SECRET THROUGHOUT UNTIL SOMETHING IS RESOLVED.

A. WELL HE IS THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND HE IS INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. I AM NOT.

Q. BUT YOU ARE COMING OUT ALWAYS WITH BITS OF INFORMATION THAT WE -- WE HAVE ALL SORTS OF IMPLICATIONS AND YOU DON'T COME OUT CLEAR.

A. I DON'T THINK I CAME OUT WITH ANY INFORMATION YESTERDAY, OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT WE --

Q. YOU CAME OUT WITH A STATEMENT AND THE SECRETARY CAME OUT WITH A STATEMENT LAST NIGHT.

A. MY STATEMENT WAS SIMPLY THAT WE WERE PLEASED AT THE REPORTS THE ISRAELIS HAD DECIDED TO ACCEPT THE IDEA OF THE UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION. I DIDN'T GET INTO THE QUESTION OF WHAT THE IDEA WAS, NEITHER ON THEIR SIDE NOR ON OUR SIDE.

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Q. THE SECRETARY SAID THAT HE DOESN'T AGREE WITH SOME OF THE CONDITIONS.

A. THAT'S CORRECT.

Q. WELL, IF IT'S STILL BEING NEGOTIATED WHY DOES HE COME OUT WITH THIS STATEMENT?

A. I WILL ADMIT THE TECHNICAL INCONSISTENCIES BETWEEN WHAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE MAY SAY AND WHAT A SPOKESMAN CAN SAY -- BUT THAT HAPPENS TO BE A STRUCTURAL FACT OF LIFE. THE SECRETARY CAN SAY WHAT HE CHOOSES TO SAY, OBVIOUSLY.

Q. JOHN, THE WASHINGTON POST REPORTER, DUSKO DODER, WAS TOLD BY AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL THAT THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT OFFERED ISRAEL A PACKAGE, AND THEY DID NOT ACCEPT IT THE WAY IT WAS OFFERED. WAS THIS PACKAGE SUBMITTED TO OR

OFFERED TO THE ARAB LEADERS AS WELL?

A. I DON'T KNOW. AGAIN, I WOULD ANSWER THAT QUESTION IN THE SAME WAY. IT'S THE SAME KIND OF QUESTION AND THE SAME KIND OF SUBJECT.

Q. WELL IS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN FAVOR OF THE BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND THE ARABS?

A. SAME ANSWER.

Q. LET ME ASK YOU THIS QUESTION, OR PERHAPS YOU WILL TAKE IT: HAS THE ISRAELI RESPONSE DISRUPTED THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES WAS ENGAGED?

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A. I AM NOT AWARE THAT IT HAS. DID YOU WANT ME TO TAKE THAT QUESTION?

Q. YES.

A. ALL RIGHT, I'LL TAKE IT.

Q. NOW THE OTHER SIDE OF THE QUESTION IS: HAS THIS ADVANCED THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS?

A. WELL YOU ARE ASKING ME TO GET INTO A JUDGMENTAL THING, AND I AM NOT ABLE TO DO THAT. I AM NOT AWARE, CERTAINLY, THAT IT HAS DISRUPTED. WHETHER IT HAS ADVANCED IS ANOTHER QUESTION I REALLY DON'T THINK I CAN GIVE YOU AN ANSWER TO.

Q. HOW DOES THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT VIEW MR. BEGIN'S CHANGING POLICY? WHEN HE CAME TO WASHINGTON HE SAID, "WE ARE READY TO GO TO GENEVA WITHOUT ANY PRECONDITIONS." AND RIGHT NOW HE IS STIPULATING ALL THE CONDITIONS HE'S GOT. WHAT IS THE AMERICAN STAND ON THAT?

A. I DON'T HAVE A COMMENT FOR YOU ON THAT. HAVE I SUCCESSFULLY SQUASHED OTHER QUESTIONS ON THE SUBJECT.?

Q. YOU SAID THAT YOU WERE PLEASED THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS ACCEPTED THE IDEA OF THE UNITED ARAB DELEGATION. CAN IT BE ASSUMED THAT WHAT YOU ARE NOT PLEASED WITH IS THAT THEY DID NOT ACCEPT THE FORMULA OF THE IDEA THAT WAS PUT TO THEM?

A. WELL YOU CAN ASSUME AS YOU CHOOSE. BUT I CANNOT INTERPRET IT FOR YOU. I AM REALLY UNABLE TO GO BEYOND WHAT I HAVE SAID TODAY AND YESTERDAY -- MOSTLY YESTERDAY.

Q. IN THE EVENT OF THE PLO BEING THE SOLE REPRESENTATIVE

OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE DOES THE UNITED STATES GOVERN-
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MENT OBJECT TO THEIR REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA?

A. THE ANSWER TO THAT IS THE ONE WE HAVE GIVEN MANY TIMES: THE UNITED STATES HAS SAID THAT THERE MUST BE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND THAT IT IS UP TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THAT CONFERENCE TO DECIDE JUST HOW THAT'S TO BE WORKED OUT.

Q. BUT WOULD YOU -- YOU ARE STILL IN FAVOR OF THAT?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO TAKE YOU ANY FURTHER THAN THAT.

Q. DIDN'T THE SECRETARY SAY YESTERDAY -- IT WAS RECORDED IN THE PRESS -- I MAY NOT BE QUITE ACCURATE HERE -- THAT THE PLO SHOULD NOT BE EXCLUDED FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS?

A. LET'S GO BACK AND CHECK THE TRANSCRIPT AND SEE WHAT HE SAID ON THAT. I HAVE THAT IN THE OFFICE.

Q. I WOULD LIKE YOU TO TAKE UP THE FOLLOWING QUESTION: WE HAVE NOW HAD ABOUT A WEEK OF TALKS AND NEGOTIATIONS IN WASHINGTON AND IN NEW YORK TO DEAL WITH THE MIDDLE EAST. DURING THAT TIME THE ADMINISTRATION HAS NOW GOT THE VIEWS OF EGYPT AND JORDAN AND ISRAEL. YET ALL THE PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE TALKS WOULD HAVE TO DO WITH ISRAEL --THE ISRAELI POSITIONS -- YOU HAVEN'T REVEALED ANYTHING ABOUT THE EGYPTIAN POSITION OR THE JORDANIAN POSITION, AS FAR AS YOUR COMMENTS ON THEM ARE CONCERNED. AND I WANTED TO KNOW, DOES THAT MEAN THAT THERE IS UNANIMITY BETWEEN THE VIEWS OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND THOSE COUNTRIES? OR ON THE OTHER HAND, WHY DO YOU SINGLE OUT COMMENTS ON ISRAEL PARTICULARLY?

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A. WELL I CANNOT SPEAK TO WHETHER THERE IS UNANIMITY AMONG THE VARIOUS ARAB COUNTRIES WHO ARE INVOLVED HERE. I THINK POSSIBLY WHAT WE HAVE HAD TO SAY -- THE FACT THAT MUCH OF WHAT WE HAVE HAD TO SAY CONCERNS ISRAEL IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT -- ONE OF THE REASONS WAS THE ISRAELI CABINET DECISION OF SUNDAY, FOR ONE THING --

Q. IT CAME OUT PUBLIC. BUT THE EGYPTIANS AND THE JORDANIAN POSITIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN TAKEN OUT PUBLICLY AND THEY HAVE SAID THAT -- FAHMI CAME HERE AND SAID, "ONLY PLO AT GENEVA." AND YET YOU NEVER COMMENTED ON YOUR POSITION ON THAT PARTICULAR POINT. ISRAEL SAID, "NO PLO," AND YOU

SAY, "WELL, LET'S SEE."

A. I DON'T THINK I HAVE COMMENTED ON ANY OF THE STATEMENTS OF ANY OF THE GOVERNMENTS.

Q. NO, NOT YOU IN PARTICULAR -- I AM TALKING ABOUT -- I WOULD LIKE YOU TO TAKE UP THIS QUESTION, PLEASE.

A. I DON'T KNOW THAT THERE IS A GOOD ANSWER FOR THAT. I THINK IT IS IN THE NATURE OF THE WAY THINGS DEVELOP AND EVOLVE. WHEN WE ARE ASKED A QUESTION ABOUT THE ISRAELI CABINET DECISION WHICH IS PUBLIC, THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAS COMMENTED ON THAT. I HAVE NOT COMMENTED ON IT EXCEPT TO SAY THAT WE WERE PLEASED THAT THEY ACCEPTED THE IDEA.

Q. MY QUESTION IS: IS THERE UNANIMITY OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION'S STAND AND THE ARAB STAND SO FAR? THIS IS MY QUESTION, AND I WOULD LIKE YOU TO TAKE IT UP BECAUSE I WOULD THINK THAT A STATEMENT ON THE EGYPTIAN TALKS, THAT THE WHITE HOUSE DID NOT MENTION ANY DIFFERENCES OF OPINION -- AND THIS WAS SINGLED OUT LATER ON.

A. FOR THE RECORD, I WILL TAKE YOUR QUESTION. BUT I REALLY THINK THAT IT FALLS INTO THE SAME TIRED OLD CATE-
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GORY OF THINGS THAT I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO TALK ABOUT HERE.

2. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION WAS POSTED IN THE DEPARTMENT PRESS OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS TAKEN AT THE SEPTEMBER 26 PRESS BRIEFING:

Q. ARE THE BLACK HEBREWS (25 OF THEM) BEING DETAINED IN ISRAEL?

A. YES. ACCORDING TO OUR LATEST INFORMATION THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IS HOLDING THEM AT A DETENTION CENTER AND AT A

A PRISON NEAR THE AIRPORT UNTIL TRANSPORTATION BACK TO THE U.S. CAN BE ARRANGED. WE ARE IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES ON THIS MATTER.

Q. HAS A U.S. CONSULAR OFFICER BEEN GIVEN ACCESS TO THEM?

A. YES. HE HAS SEEN THEM ALL AND HAS INFORMED US THAT THEY ARE BEING WELL TREATED.

Q. DO THE REJECTIONISTS INCLUDE THE PLO?

A. NO. THE PLO HAS AGREED TO RESPECT THE LEBANESE CEASE-

FIRE. THERE ARE PALESTINIAN REJECTIONIST GROUPS WHICH HAVE BEEN UNDER THE PLO UMBRELLA OR HAVE BEEN ATTACHED TO IT AT LEAST NOMINALLY. OTHER REJECTIONIST GROUPS HAVE DISASSOCIATED THEMSELVES FROM THE PLO. IN THE PRESENT SITUATION IN LEBANON, HOWEVER, NONE OF THE REJECTIONIST GROUPS ACCEPT THE AUTHORITY OF THE PLO.

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